

# STEPPENWOLF THEATRE CO.

October 11, 2017

Chairman Ajit Pai  
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn  
Commissioner Michael O'Rielly  
Commissioner Brendan Carr  
Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel  
c/o Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: ET Docket No. 14-165 and GN Docket Nos. 12-268 and 14-166 Via Electronic Filing

Dear Chairman Pai, Commissioner Clyburn, Commissioner O'Rielly, Commissioner Carr, Commissioner Rosenworcel, and Ms. Dortch,

On behalf of Steppenwolf Theatre Company, located in Chicago, Illinois, that provides approximately 386 performances per year to 170,000 audience members and education programs to 14,500 students, I write with concern about available spectrum and protection for our wireless microphones and backstage communications devices. Steppenwolf Theatre Company is where great acting meets big ideas. Our passion is to tell stories about how we live now. Our mission is to engage audiences in an exchange of ideas that makes us think harder, laugh longer, feel more. We present a seven play season as well as a two play Steppenwolf for Young Adults season, visiting company engagements, special events and Look Out, a multidisciplinary performance season. We operate 3 theaters whose capacities range from 80 seats to 515 seats. In each of our spaces we aim to provide audiences with intimate experiences whether they're sitting in the front row or the last row in the balcony. Access to wireless technology without interference is vital in achieving that intimacy.

We strongly support the Commission's proposal to expand Part 74 license eligibility to include persons and organizations that can demonstrate the need for professional, high-quality audio and have the capability of providing it through conscientious use of wireless microphones. We support and endorse the Comments filed in these dockets by The Performing Arts Wireless Microphone Working Group.

Professional performing arts organizations hold thousands of performances each year, and wireless microphones are essential to producing high-quality performances while mitigating significant public safety concerns. Professional wireless capability, with successful interference protection, is essential to our sector.

Steppenwolf owns 12 wireless Shure UHF-R Dual Channel J5 Band units able to tune to frequencies between 578 – 638 MHz, 8 body packs and 10 hand-held microphones. Additionally, we own 5 In-Ear Monitors, a wireless ClearCom system, an FM-tuned assisted listening device system, wireless radios and iPad remote controls for our light boards.

Our microphones have a life expectancy of 15-20 year because our Audio Engineer, Martha Wegener, takes impeccable care of the devices. Martha has 30 years of experience in the field, is a member of the Audio Engineer Society and has taken a number of professional training classes. With her vast knowledge, Martha has been able to preserve our equipment beyond its normal life expectancy. Our microphones were replaced in 2010 when we were required to vacate the 700MHz frequencies. We were able to upgrade our microphones quickly

then because of an in-kind donation from Shure Inc. Unfortunately, we have learned that this gift will likely not be available to us during this next transition. It will cost approximately \$25,000 to replace our current equipment to comply with the new regulations. Given this cost I would like to be assured that we have access to a system that will function properly without interruption.

I would urge the Commission to grant a Part 74 license if an applicant can provide certification of:

- A mission statement of providing performing arts to the public;
- A history of professional-quality wireless audio presentations to audiences without interference;
- Technical guidance and frequency coordination by qualified professionals (active in audio engineering who have academic degrees or equivalent professional experience and who are familiar with radio-frequency coordination);
- A commitment to register for protection only the frequencies, times, and locations actually needed; and
- A practice of keeping logs of all wireless microphone uses, including frequencies, for all performances.

I thank the Commission for giving the public a chance to comment on this very important issue. We, and many other arts organizations, rely on our wireless systems to bring the highest quality art to our patrons and we should have access to the ever-narrowing available spectrum without interruption. I hope that the Commission considers the burden placed on the arts community, especially the non-profit arts community, in vacating the 700MHz band and that the Commission agrees that after such an investment, we should have the right to interference protection on our remaining frequencies.

The Performing Arts industry in Chicago, and in the United States at large, provides a meaningful and significant service to the public. We contribute to our local economies by creating jobs, increasing tourism and partnering with local businesses. We also provide education to communities that would not otherwise have access to art, providing students the opportunity to live more creative and fulfilling lives. I respectfully endorse the Commission's proposal to expand Part 74 LPAS rules to accommodate performing arts organizations and educational institutions that use fewer than 50 wireless microphones. The proposal offers the performing arts community peace of mind during this next transition and assists us in offering audiences the opportunity to live more meaningful lives.

Sincerely,



David Schmitz  
Executive Director  
Steppenwolf Theatre Company